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NSC BRIEFING

9 July 1953

THE CHINESE COMMUNIST OFF-SHORE ISLAND CAMPAIGN

Chinese Communist military forces in East China, including some troops trained in combat in Korea, have seized a total of 13 Nationalist-held or Nationalist-controlled islands off the Chekiang coast since 29 May. The pattern of operations suggests that these forces will attack other small islands in the area and, possibly by fall, the Nationalist-held Tachen Islands.

Under present circumstances, the six Chinese Communist armies totalling about 180,000 men, in the two provinces closest to this area, can capture all of these islands whenever Peiping chooses to make available the necessary naval transportation. Fourteen armies, or 420,000 men, as well as several MIG-15 units, are stationed in East China.

The current island campaign was begun on 29 May when two reinforced Chinese Communist battalions, probably from the

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veteran 20th Army, once in Korea, landed at Huochashan and Yanghsu. Similar landings were made at Talushan and Hsiaolushan in the same area two hours later. On 31 May, Communist forces captured Peichishan. During the next three weeks, these forces repulsed successfully the attempts of Nationalist troops to regain the islands, occupied additional islands in the area, and began the shelling of Pishan and Chikushan Islands.

By 28 June, 13 islands previously occupied or controlled by Nationalist forces had been captured by Communist units. Periodic shelling of Pishan and the Tachen Islands accompanied these attacks, and an increase in Chinese Communist junk and shipping activity has been reported. Nationalist Air Force reconnaissance on 5 July, however, showed no significant concentration of Communist ships near the Tachens. Reports suggest that Pishan, now held by some 1,500 Nationalist guerrillas, will be the next island attacked by Communist forces.

The Tachens are now garrisoned by approximately 7,000 Nationalist troops. The Ministry of National Defense at Taipei has decided to send a poorly-trained and poorly-equipped Nationalist division of 5,000 troops to the Tachens by mid-July. It is improbable, however, that Nationalist forces can hold the islands in the event of a sustained Chinese Communist attack.

The Tachen Islands lie about 25 miles from the Chekiang coast. Their fall would limit the collection of military intelligence in Fukien and Chekiang provinces and would seriously hinder the support of anti-Communist mainland operations now being staged.

Approximately 5,000 Nationalist troops are stationed on Matsu Island, which lies about 30 miles off the Fukien coast southwest of the Tachens. Communist forces have not threatened this island directly since their occupation of four small islands in the general area last August. Chinmen Island,

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close to the mainland southwest of Matsu, is garrisoned by about 50,000 Nationalist troops. Despite occasional shelling of the island by Communist guns at Amoy, it has not been attacked.

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